

Photoshop

Windows (Photoshop 5.0.x): Does Photoshop have any updates that take advantage of my smokin' new Pentium III?

You bet! There are three new Adobe Photoshop 5.0.x plug-ins that take advantage of your Intel Pentium III processor. These plug-ins can significantly speed functions and operations in Photoshop 5.0.2 and boost its overall performance on your new system. To fully optimize Photoshop 5.0.2, you need to install three file updates. The most important of these is MMXCore.8bx, which provides the already-existing performance enhancements for earlier Pentium systems and adds the extra muscle specifically for Pentium IIIs. There are also updated LightingEffects.8bf and Wind.8bf filters especially fine-tuned for the Pentium III. (The functionality of these plug-ins has been rolled into version 5.5.)

You can download these files and the corresponding installation instructions from Adobe's Web site at www.adobe.com/supportservice/custsupport/LIBRARY/564a.htm. The three separate plug-ins are available in a single downloadable file (called Pentium III Plug-Ins for Photoshop 5.0.2). All three are updated versions of existing installed plug-ins—after downloading, just move (or rename, if you like) the existing plug-ins to another folder, and then put the new ones in their place.

Remember, though, that these updates aren't generalized miracle workers: any performance increases you get from them are affected by many other factors, such as the size and number of files being used, amount of hard-disk space and RAM, and other system variables.

Windows (Photoshop 5.0.x): I want to display images in my Photoshop 5.0.x contact sheets by name. I tried sorting the files first in Windows Explorer, expecting Photoshop to pick up on this trick, but it seems to show them in an unpredictable order no matter how they're sorted. What's the deal?

It does seem logical to expect that you could control the order of your contact sheet this way, but unfortunately that's not the case. Photoshop 5.0.x for Windows doesn't have an option for specifying the exact order of your files on a contact sheet. The real order is determined by several arcane factors, including the modification date and other Windows system functions. Photoshop 5.5, however, includes an improved contact-sheet plug-in that *does* sort images by filename. The plug-in even includes the option to place the filename beneath each thumbnail—very handy for identifying those tiny thumbnails!

This updated plug-in is automatically installed with version 5.5, in the same place it was before (in the Automate submenu of the File menu), only under a new name: Contact Sheet II. Make sure that the Use Filename As Caption option is selected in the plug-in's dialog box if you want the new labels on your sheet.

Windows/Mac (Photoshop): Some of my Photoshop images have jagged lines and weird colors running throughout the files. I didn't add this data, and I just can't get rid of it. What causes this, and can I recover my original data?

Whether you can recover the file depends on the cause of these problems. You may have a video-display problem and need an updated video driver. Or your file might be damaged (that's a harder problem to fix).

If your image looks funky on screen, test for a video-display

problem by printing your file to a PostScript printer. If the print-out looks great, you probably just need to update your video display driver. (That's because PostScript printing does not involve video drivers. When you print to some non-PostScript printers, the video driver can be involved in generating the printed output.) Check with your manufacturer for the most up-to-date software for your video card. Sometimes, too, just switching your video display to 256 colors will eliminate this problem. If that is the case for you, you can temporarily work or print with reduced colors and download any new video software later.

But if your PostScript print test comes out looking as bad as your display, it's very likely that you have damaged pixel data (sometimes called "artifacts"). Possible causes include saving to a damaged hard disk or removable storage medium.

Artifacts can oftentimes be difficult to track and diagnose. They may come and go at random, so be sure to keep a log of your experiences with them: what file format you used, the file size, where it was saved, what the artifacts looked like, when they occurred, what other programs were open at the time, and so on. Hopefully, this can help you establish a pattern to narrow down the cause of the damaged data. And don't forget: it's always a good idea to make backups (to a different disk and/or different medium) of your critical files.

For information on various causes of artifacts and what to watch out for, read one of the platform-specific technical documents on Adobe's Web site. For Windows, go to www.adobe.com/supportservice/custsupport/SOLUTIONS/189fa.htm; for Mac, go to www.adobe.com/supportservice/custsupport/SOLUTIONS/1713e.htm. These documents will give you helpful information about preventing such problems in the future.

Windows/Mac (Photoshop 4.0x and later): None of Photoshop's color-management dialog boxes have shortcut keys. Is there any way to assign keyboard shortcuts so that I can open them faster?

Absolutely! You can create an action that opens any dialog box that doesn't have a hot key, and then assign the shortcut key to your new action. Here's an example using the CMYK Setup dialog box (which is available only in versions 5.0 and later).

1. Choose New Action from the Action palette's pop-up menu.
 2. In the New Action dialog box, define the action: Type Open CMYK Setup in the Name field. In version 5.x, in the Set field, select Default Actions or a custom set. Assign a function key, such as Shift + F2. You can use any combination of function keys, Shift, and, in version 5.5, Control/Command. Click Record.
 3. While recording, choose Insert Menu Item from the Action palette's menu.
 4. In the Insert Menu Item dialog box, choose Color Settings from the File menu, choose CMYK Setup, and then click OK.
 5. Click the Stop Playing/Recording button in the Action palette.
- Test your shortcut key by pressing Shift + F2 (or whichever keys you assigned) on your keyboard.

Since you've taken the time to customize, you probably won't want to lose those shortcuts, so it's worth noting where they're stored. In version 5.x, actions are stored in the Actions Palette.psp (in Windows) or Actions Palette (on the Mac) file in Photoshop's Settings subfolder. In version 4.x, your new actions are stored in Photoshop's catch-all Preferences file—in the Prefs subfolder in Windows or the Preferences subfolder of the System Folder on

Micro Tip

Press Ctrl + Alt + Z (Windows) or Command + Option + Z (Mac) to undo multiple times. This takes you one step backward in your History palette. You can undo as many times as you have steps in the History palette.

the Mac—so be careful not to delete your preferences unless absolutely necessary (say, for troubleshooting).

One more method for safeguarding your new shortcuts is to save your actions in sets. For more information on sets, see “Organizing sets of actions” on page 357 of the *Adobe Photoshop 5.0 User Guide* or “Saving, loading, and replacing sets of actions” on page 358 of the *Adobe Photoshop 4.0 User Guide*.

Windows/Mac (Photoshop): I want to create graphics for a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. Right now I’m exporting GIFs with transparency, but I don’t like their hard edges. Is there any way I can get transparency around the edge but maintain a soft border?

Sure—you can use the PNG file format. PNG (portable network graphic) is a lossless RGB format that supports 24-bit color and multiple levels of transparency, used by PowerPoint versions for Office 97 (with the SR-2 update) and Office 98. Here’s a step-by-step example for this technique.

1. In Photoshop, select the area you want to keep. To keep a soft edge, feather it by choosing Feather from the Select menu. (If you don’t want a soft edge, skip the feathering.)
2. Choose Save Selection from the Select menu. This will create an alpha channel that stores the selection area. In PNG files, anything outside of this selection area will be transparent or partly transparent.
3. Choose Save A Copy from the File menu.

Step up to the matte (ImageStyler)

Even if you aren’t familiar with the term “matte,” you’ve seen the notion used many times—and you can easily make one yourself in Adobe ImageStyler. Mattes use alpha-channel or luminance information to create transparency or semitransparency, masking or giving texture to images.

The most obvious and straightforward use of ImageStyler’s Active Matte feature is to use the shape of one image to mask another. To do this, import an image into your ImageStyler composition (choose Place from the File menu) and, with that image selected, drag a shape from the Shapes palette to the Active Matte preview box in the Properties palette.



ImageStyler will mask your image with the shape you dragged—the shape’s outline will determine the shape of the mask.

If you import a Photoshop image that contains an alpha channel, ImageStyler can use that channel as a mask. But ImageStyler can also create its own matte from an image’s data itself, often making alpha-channel operations in Photoshop unnecessary. Import an image, make sure it’s selected, and choose Build Alpha From Image from the Alpha Channel menu in the Properties palette;

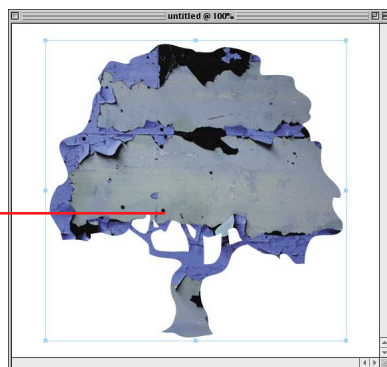
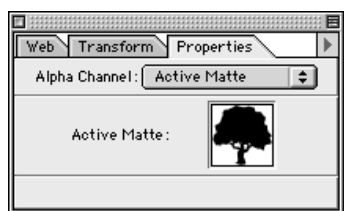
the white areas should become transparent. ImageStyler reads the image’s luminance, so black images on white backgrounds work best for this—RGB or grayscale images tend to give unpredictable, semitransparent results.

Want customized, or just additional, active-matte shapes? There are lots of images on the ImageStyler product CD (not installed by default; look in the Clip Art subfolder of the Images subfolder of the Stock Art folder) that might have just the one you want. To use any of these images for shape-making, just drag files to the Shapes subfolder of the ImageStyler folder on your hard disk.

Or make your own: nearly any vector or bitmap image file imaginable—TIFF, GIF, JPEG, PNG, BMP, EPS, PSD (native Photoshop), DIB (Windows), or PICT (Mac OS)—can be an active-matte shape. To “roll your own,” import any image file into ImageStyler (choose Place from the File menu), and then, with it selected, click the New Shape button at the bottom of the Shapes palette. When prompted, give it a name to save it (in Windows, you also have to type in its original name before you can name it as a shape); once it’s saved, it will be available (alphabetically) in the Shapes palette. Or just copy your file into ImageStyler’s Shapes folder and restart ImageStyler.

Now that you’ve mastered the relatively simple “edge effects” aspect of active mattes, you can delve deeper into your design options. You can create (or use existing) shapes with soft edges and semitransparency, such as

grayscale images, to create artistic, distressed, or other textured illusions. Photoshop filters are a good starting place for creating such appearances; when you use filtered images as Active Matte shapes in ImageStyler, the highlights, scratches, or other transformations will appear as transparent or semitransparent regions in your image (based on the tonal variations in the shape image). To learn more about ImageStyler and its capabilities, visit www.adobe.com/studio/tipstechniques/imagestyler.html or www.imagestyler.com. ♦



4. Select PNG as the file format, and be sure that Exclude Alpha Channels and Exclude Non-Image Data are both deselected.
5. Launch PowerPoint and insert your newly created file. While it will still be dithered in some views (sorry, that's beyond our control), you get a smoother edge than you would with the GIF format. When you actually run the presentation, your edges will look splendid!

For more information on PNG's benefits and limitations, see "Look Out, GIF and JPEG," *Adobe Magazine*, Spring 1998.

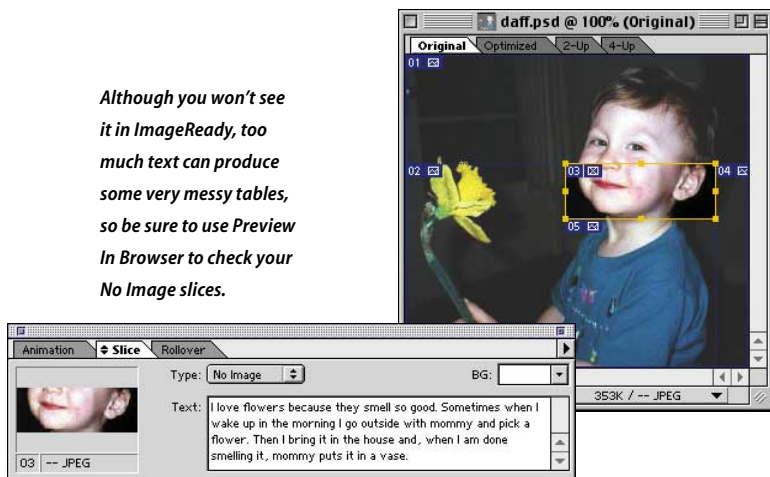
ImageStyler | ImageReady

Windows/Mac (ImageReady 2.0): I've been playing with the new slicing feature and eventually stumbled across the concept of "No Image" slices. ImageReady is a graphics program, so why the heck would I want "No Image"?

Good question. Besides being a way to add plain text to your Adobe ImageReady composition (which will end up as HTML text in the generated table), No Image slices can act as placeholders. You can then go back to the empty table cell in the ImageReady-generated HTML file to add your own code, such as a link to another graphic or location. This technique can also help you set up an image map with a minimum of angst. For those of you who are very size conscious, slicing out portions of an image may also, in some cases, decrease its file size and therefore its download time.

When you convert an image slice to No Image format, you're making it capable of holding text instead of pixel data (an image).

Although you won't see it in ImageReady, too much text can produce some very messy tables, so be sure to use Preview In Browser to check your No Image slices.



It's easy to add the desired text; just type it in the Text field in the Slices palette. However, before you type in an entire novel, there are a few things you should know about No Image slices. First, there's a limit on how much text you can add to a slice (though you can add more if you open and modify the HTML file in a text editor). Second is a related and more serious limitation: the size of the slice itself. Too much text (or text that's too big) can push the other cells out of alignment. You can keep this in check by using the Preview In Browser option from the File menu. This will display most glaring problems with your No Image cells, but it's also a good idea to check your files across multiple browsers and across platforms; each has its own way of displaying tables.

When you format slices as No Image, the text replaces that portion of your graphic; it'll be a plain text area (though you can select a background color in the Slices palette). But it doesn't remove the data permanently; you can change the slice back to Image format and see that portion of the graphic again.

One last warning: if you're thinking of formatting your No Image slice's text, remember that we're talking about HTML here, the no-frills format—if you want stylized text (italic, for example), you'll need to manually add the appropriate HTML formatting tags directly in the Text field of the No Image slice's dialog box.

Windows/Mac (ImageStyler and ImageReady): I've exported my composition as an HTML file. But when I open this file in my browser, it doesn't meet seamlessly with the upper-left corner! Why?

By default, HTML files generated by ImageReady and ImageStyler don't contain the code that aligns objects with the browser corners. But before we tell you how you can fix this little problem, you should be aware that some browsers just don't align individual objects in the extreme top left corner of a page.

That said, here's what you can do to prevent browser offset in accommodating browsers. You'll need to open the HTML file in a text editor such as Notepad (Windows) or SimpleText (Macintosh) and manually add a bit of HTML code to the file. Now, don't start sweating; even if you've never written HTML code, you can easily add these few small tags that tell your browser to tuck your images up in the corner.

First, launch your text editor and open your HTML file. Then locate the body tag (<body>) and add the following text in front of the closing bracket:

```
topmargin=0 leftmargin=0
marginwidth=0 marginheight=0
```

It now looks like this:

```
<body topmargin=0 leftmargin=0
marginwidth=0 marginheight=0>
```

Internet Explorer 4.x will read the top/left margin tags; Netscape Navigator 4.x will read the height/width tags (please note that some browsers may not support these tags). Each will ignore the tags it doesn't understand. It's fine if you happen to have other tags in the body-tag area; they won't conflict with each other.

Once you've added this bit of code, just save the file again right there in your text editor (no need to go back to ImageStyler), reopen it in your Web browser, and voilà! Gap closed.

For more on the browser side of all this, see document 322716, "Overview of Limitations and Features in Netscape Navigator, Internet Explorer, and AOL Browsers," online at www.adobe.com/supportservice/custsupport/SOLUTIONS/18362.htm. ♦